



# POLICE COMMISSION

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 7, 2020

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

Manchester Police Department  
405 Valley Street  
Manchester, NH 03103

The Regular Monthly Meeting was held at the Manchester Community Resource Center on October 7, 2020, at 09:00 hours, attended by:

**Commissioners** Scott Spradling (Chairman), Manny Content, Eva Castillo, Charlie Sherman, John Cronin (not yet confirmed)

**Police Department Staff** Interim Chief Ryan Grant, Capt. Sean Leighton, Capt. Allen Aldenberg, Capt. Brian O'Keefe, Lt. Tim Patterson, Lt. Brandon Murphy, Heather Hamel (PIO) and Kim Demers (Admin. Assist.)

**Others attending the Public Session:** Former Police Commissioner Steven Spain, Manchester Business owner and blogger Jeff Hastings, and Union Leader newspaper reporter Mark Hayward, and Manchester Ink reporter Carol Robidoux.

## 1. COMMISSION CHAIRMAN OPENING COMMENTS

- Comm. Chairman Scott Spradling opened the meeting at 9:05 a.m., welcoming all those present.
- Comm. Spradling welcomed newly appointed commissioner John Cronin, who was invited to attend the meeting but is unable to participate in any voting processes until he has been sworn in by the City Clerk.
- Prior to entering into the business of the meeting, Chief Grant requested former Commissioner Steve Spain to come forward so that a plaque might be presented to him in appreciation of his 5 and a half years of service as a police commissioner. Chief Grant thanked Mr. Spain for his dedicated service and for his valuable input over the years.

Mr. Spain advised that it has been his honor and privilege to have served as a MPD "Commish" and stated he began his term with a "stained view" of police work after having listened to criticism on TV. Serving as commissioner caused him to reevaluate his beliefs and opinions. He has been amazed by the department's application of scientific methods to solve cases and interaction with community social agencies. In his opinion. In his opinion MPD is a model for intermediate sized PDs nationwide. He cited leadership decisions, efforts to employ personnel that mirror the diversity of the community, respect for different ideas and beliefs, and implementation of innovative and imaginative ideas directed toward city youth, seniors, at the community as a whole. He voiced his opinion that police officers are social workers dressed in blue, and he encouraged the department to continue to keep the community informed, because the general population is not aware of the positive impact the department has in Manchester.

## 2. NOTICES POSTED / APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- The Commission was advised by Secretary Kim Demers that the notices had been posted at City Hall, the City Library, as well as on the MPD's website homepage, event calendar, and via social media.
- Commissioners unanimously voted to approve the minutes for the meeting held September 9, 2020.

## 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Comm. Chair Spradling explained that each Manchester resident wishing to speak shall state his/her name and address, each will have only one opportunity to speak, and will be limited to three minutes in which to address comments on a particular subject to the Chairman of the Commission.

*None of those present wished to speak.*

## 4. DIVISIONAL REPORTS

### Community Policing Division – Capt. O'Keefe:

- There are currently two open area officer positions.
- The Downtown Walking Patrol ended on Saturday, October 3; grateful to have had the three assigned officers assist all summer.
- The Mounted Unit retired Valor on August 25. Many volunteers were on hand to send him off to his retirement after 17 years of service to the PD and Manchester.
- MPAL hosted a "virtual" annual Footrace for the Fallen on October 3.
- Area Officers have been assisting the Health Department with visiting homeless camps throughout the city, working collaboratively to identify any health related issues as a result of unkempt conditions.
- Ofc. Nate Linstad utilized CPTED methods to clean up the Auburn South Back alley. [CPTED: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. A multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior that

focuses on changing how places are laid out, how they look and feel, with the goal of reducing crime and fear, and improving quality of life.]

- Senior Services Ofc. Steve Duquette resumed the Senior Walks program for the fall, and each Monday has had an outstanding participation. It appears people are excited to get out and enjoy the company of others.
- Ofcs. Ed Devereaux and Tom Whelan continue to work with the MHRA property managers to ensure all needs are being met.
- A new substation has opened at 400 Commercial Street.

#### **Questions/Comments/Discussion:**

- Comm. Sherman enquired if the Elm Street substation located at the Welcome Center is open full time for police business. Capt. O'Keefe advised any officer can access the facility at any time, but it is basically used for officers to stop in to type reports.
- Comm. Content enquired about the homeless camps on the property of the Superior Court House. Capt. O'Keefe advised that the property is state owned. While MPD can take action reference ordinance violations or crime, the state is the only authority for removal of the camps.

#### **Investigative Division – Capt. Leighton:**

- Records Specialist Roxanne Pittman has been selected to fill the position of Investigative Division administrative assistant. The position has been vacant since March. Roxanne will begin her duties once a replacement for her Records position has been identified.
- Four additional detectives trained in NIBIN [National Integrated Ballistic Information Network].
- All but two SROs are returning to schools next week.
- On October 8, Glenn Lancaster will be pleading to federal charges for manufacturing child pornography and will be sentenced to 18 to 25 years in prison. He secretly recorded 11-12 minor females. The MPD and the ICAC [Internet Crimes Against Children] task force conducted the investigation.
- Juvenile Unit Sgt. Khavari completed Women's Leadership Institute training, an 8-week Zoom course sponsored by the IACP [International Association of Chiefs of Police].
- The annual month-long Beards for Bucks campaign began October 1. The campaign brings public awareness to the work being done by the Child Advocacy Centers [CAC] throughout the state and the money raised by police departments goes to their respective local CACs.
- There has been an increase in ACERT deployments. [ACERT: Adverse Childhood Experiences Response Team.]

#### **Questions/Comments/Discussion:**

- Comm. Sherman enquired if there is any difference investigating a child pornography case as a federal case as opposed to at the state level. Capt. Leighton advised that there is no difference really, just that it is tried at the federal court via the U.S. Attorney's office.

#### **Special Enforcement Division – Lt. Murphy:**

- On October 2, a multi-divisional enforcement effort was undertaken to address the Auburn Street south back alleyway rash of violence, illicit drug distribution and disorderly behavior. Members of the Patrol, Community Policing, and Special Enforcement divisions worked collaboratively to develop and to execute an effective interaction / crime suppression operation, as well as deliver a community message. The operation resulted in nine arrests, as well as the recovery of two firearms and the seizure of illegal drugs. The charges ranged from investigations centered on the sale of controlled drugs to disorderly conduct. Of equal importance was the message sent that violence, trafficking of controlled drugs, and overall disruptive violent behavior that disturbed the residents of the area would not be tolerated. Follow-up patrols of the area have demonstrated the message was effectively received and no further activity has been observed. The situation will be continually monitored for reemergence or adjustment by the primary violent actors.
- After conducting an assessment process, five officers were selected to become members of the SWAT Team.
- The Street Crime Unit continues to focus efforts on problem locations and the Special Enforcement Unit continues efforts to disrupt drug sales in the city, as well as actively work multiple on-going investigations with state and federal partners to stop illegal drugs from being brought into our city and state.

#### **Questions/Comments/Discussion:**

- Comm. Sherman enquired of the 9 arrests made during the Auburn Street alley operation how many were released on bail. Lt. Murphy advised that all but two were released shortly after arrest, and the other two were released the next day.

### **Legal Division – Lt. Patterson:**

- There are two vacant Records Specialist positions and two candidates are in the hiring process.
- District Court is conducting phone conference hearings in an attempt to deal with numerous cases backlogged due to the COVID-19 pandemic. MPD's Legal Division is working to assist in making the process go as smoothly as possible.
- The Hillsborough County Superior Court is holding its first trial since the pandemic started in March.

### **Questions/Comments/Discussion:**

- Comm. Content enquired if there have been any changes to the bail reform bill. Lt. Patterson advised that a report is due to be presented to the governor on November 1. In June of this year there was one change to include a flight risk factor in consideration of bail.
- Comm. Spradling enquired if dealing with the backlog of district court cases created a need for extra hours for MPD staff. Lt. Patterson advised the backlog is a court issue, which is compounded by a shortage of judges. It is a daunting task as the rights of the defendants must be kept in mind.
- Comm. Cronin enquired as to the number of cases backlogged since the start of the COVID pandemic compared to a normal backlog. Lt. Patterson advised that there are approximately 2000 backlogged cases where there are usually approximately 500. There are always cases pending whether traffic ticket resolution or domestic violence cases. Comm. Cronin asked if there were any statistics reference the number that go to trial. Lt. Patterson responded that he would have to do some research to acquire the data.

### **Patrol Division – Capt. Aldenberg:**

- Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) planned for this month has been cancelled due to the instructor being based out of New York, which is a hotspot for COVID.
- Fifty-one officers and four supervisors have been identified to train for a newly formed Mobile Field Force/Civil Disturbance Resolution Team.
- The MPD CIT team was recently made aware that they have been selected to receive the Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester's 2020 Community Leadership Award.

### **Questions/Comments/Discussion:**

- Comm. Content enquired if the Drone Unit fell under the supervision of the Patrol Division. Capt. Aldenberg confirmed that it was, however the Drone Operators were assigned to various divisions. Comm. Content further enquired if there had been any thought of using the drones outside the high schools during peak times of the day, just to keep an eye on activity. Capt. Aldenberg advised that it not been a consideration, but was a good idea. He stated that he would have to seek legal input due to the juvenile issue, and would have to look into obtaining approval for the area from the FAA.
- Comm. Cronin stated that during the Black Lives Matter demonstrations that occurred on S. Willow Street in June. He heard great things about a team from another agency that assisted at the event. Capt. Aldenberg confirmed that MPD had assistance from the Nashua PD and State Police civil disturbance reaction teams. The reason why MPD is forming its own team is so the PD doesn't have to rely on another agency's assistance.

### **Administrative Division – Chief Grant on behalf of Capt. Mucci:**

- The department is currently down 20 officers. There are 10 candidates that have made it through the polygraph phase of the hiring process; three more are scheduled for polygraphs this week.
- There are a number of state certified officers who have begun the hiring process; however they will not be ready for the upcoming class. Therefore, another in-house academy is being considered strictly for certified officers.
- The department has taken delivery of six new Ford Explorers, which are being outfitted with police equipment such as sirens and light bars. The new vehicles should be in service in a few weeks.
- The Board of Mayor and Aldermen approved an increase in the MPD fleet by 10 cars, to accommodate the total increase of 30 officers by fiscal year 2021.
- There two vacancies in dispatch and interviews to identify candidates continue.
- On October 8, there are interviews scheduled for the open Crime Analyst position. This is an important position to fill; in the interim everyone has been pitching in as needed.

## **5. COMMENTS FROM CHIEF GRANT**

- Chief Grant stated he has been filling in as Interim Chief since October 1, following Chief Capano's retirement on September 30. All department functions have been running status quo; Chief Gant extended kudos to the

command staff, who provide input on all issues. Everything is done as a team. There will be no promotions or major movement until a new chief has been appointed.

- At the October 6 BMA meeting, Mayor Craig nominated Capt. Aldenberg for appointment to the Chief of Police position. The nomination now has to lay over to the next BMA meeting on October 20. Chief Grant will be working with Capt. Aldenberg on day-to-day operations and expects that Capt. Aldenberg will do a great job as Chief.
- The Auburn Street back alley situation was a major issue. The department targeted the problem and achieved substantial results. One of the arrested subjects was back in the area the following day. Some environmental changes were made to the area that hopefully will discourage continued activity. Additional lighting was installed, overgrowth of trees and shrubs were cut back and a guardrail that encouraged seating was removed.
- Kim Demers, the Chief's Secretary, has submitted a note advising of her intent to retire effective December 1, after 30 years as a city employee, 24 of those years with MPD. She has served as secretary for 5 chiefs over a 16-year period. She does a lot of behind the scenes functions like keeping in touch with retirees, setting up awards and swearing-in ceremonies, and is very knowledgeable in departmental history. She will be a huge loss for the department.
- Thank you to Renie Denton and MCRC for once again allowing MPD to use the facility for today's meeting.

#### **Questions/Comments/Discussion:**

- Comm. Content enquired as to the status of the Officer Aaron Brown situation. Chief Grant stated he could only respond that it is still pending.
- Comm. Sherman commented that he had enjoyed a presentation by the Gang Prevention Unit a few years back and enquired if the Gang Unit could provide updates at a future meeting. Chief Grant agreed that was a good idea and further suggested that Sgt. Matt Barter who heads the Anti-Crime Unit, which was very much involved the Auburn Street alley cleanup, could also be called in to provide a report.
- Comm. Cronin asked about the status of homeless camps and panhandling in the city, as it appears to be down, at least in the areas that he frequents. Chief Grant stated he couldn't provide a status, but is glad to hear that the activity appears to have lessened. The situation on Canal Street has improved somewhat. Outreach agencies and police officers push for the homeless to use the homeless shelter and other resources. Unfortunately, as much outreach is being done, the homeless cannot be forced to use the available resources. In fact, for many living outdoors and panhandling are their preferred lifestyle.
- Comm. Sherman, based on his past years of experience as director of the New Horizons Shelter, advised that mental health issues are prevalent among the homeless. He is glad to see state agencies getting involved, but it is a tough situation. The PD's involvement is only a small component of addressing the situation, while Mental Health is the major component. Everyone has to keep in mind that these homeless individuals are human beings with the same rights as everyone else.
- Comm. Sherman enquired if the department was facing issues of officers taking time off due to COVID. Chief Grant stated that it has not been a great issue. A handful have had to quarantine due to exposure with family members who have tested positive or have had contact with a member of the public who has COVID. Extra efforts are being made to sanitize the cars and common areas in the department frequently; wearing masks and social distancing while engaging with the public is protocol. The department is short staffed, but it is a good investment to have an officer stay out for 2-3 days to await results of COVID testing.
- Comm. Content expressed his concerns of kids on bicycles riding up and down the streets at all times, not obeying traffic laws. He described the situation as an accident waiting to happen and stated he had almost struck a kid on a bike recently. Chief Grant stated that the Community Policing officers have been dealing with the bicycling issues, but in the scope of the big picture, the issue has not been a major problem. The department isn't ignoring it; action is definitely taken when the activity is seen.

#### **6. RETIREMENTS / RESIGNATIONS**

Comm. Spradling acknowledged the retirements of:

- Jaime Gallant, Patrol Lieutenant, will retire 11/15/20, after 21.5 years with MPD.
- Kim Demers, Chief's Secretary, will retire 12/01/20, after 30 years with the City; 24 years at MPD.

#### **7. COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS**

Comm. Spradling stated that there was no administrative business that needed to be addressed.

He congratulated Kim Demers on her pending retirement and thanked her for her years of service and the assistance provided to the Police Commission over the years.

## **8. TENTATIVE DATE OF THE NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING**

- Wednesday, November 4, 2020, at 9:00 a.m.

## **9. END OF PUBLIC SESSION**

The Public Session ended at 9:50 a.m.

In preparation of entering Nonpublic Session, Comm. Spradling requested members of the public to leave the room. Comm. Cronin was also advised that he must also leave the room as he had yet to be duly sworn in as a Police Commissioner by the City Clerk.

## **10. NONPUBLIC SESSION**

### **NONPUBLIC SESSION**

### **MINUTES SEALED**

**PUBLIC SESSION INTO NON-PUBLIC SESSION:** 9:52 a.m.

MOTION: Comm. Spradling asked for a motion by roll call vote to suspend the Public Session and enter into Nonpublic Session as authorized by:

RSA 91-A:3, II (e) "Consideration or negotiation of pending claims or litigation which has been threatened in writing or filed by or against the public body or any subdivision thereof..."

Motion by Comm. Sherman, seconded by Comm. Castillo.

Roll Call vote:

Comm. Spradling – yes; Comm. Content – yes; Comm. Castillo – yes; Comm. Sherman – yes

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### **END OF NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

MOTION: Comm. Spradling made a motion to end the Nonpublic Session and return to Public Session. The motion was seconded by Comm. Content.

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### **RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION:** 10:16 a.m.

### **MOTION TO SEAL RSA 91-A: 3 III:**

"Minutes of proceedings in nonpublic session shall be kept and the record of all actions shall be promptly made available for public inspection, except as provided in this section..."

- "divulgence of the information likely would affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of the body or agency itself,
- or render the proposed action ineffective,
- or pertain to terrorism..."

Comm. Spradling asked for a motion to seal the following minutes of the Nonpublic Session.

RSA 91-A:3, II (e) "Consideration or negotiation of pending claims or litigation which has been threatened in writing or filed by or against the public body or any subdivision thereof..."

MOTION: by Comm. Content, seconded by Comm. Castillo to seal the minutes of the Nonpublic Session as authorized above.

Roll Call vote:

Comm. Spradling – yes; Comm. Content – yes; Comm. Castillo – yes; Comm. Sherman – yes

## **11. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

There was no further business to discuss in the Public Session.

MOTION: Comm. Content, seconded by Comm. Castillo to end the public session and adjourn the meeting.

Time: 10:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Kim Demers, Secretary